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INDEX OF CONTENTS.

Editorial.	PAGE
Ira Remsen.....	280
Science versus Humbug.....	290
Fire in Drug Stores.....	291
A New Fad in Therapeutics.....	294
National Wholesale Druggists' Association.....	295
A Modern Instance.....	295
The Pan-American Medical Congress Excursion at Rome.....	296
Original Articles.	
PRACTICAL PHARMACY.	
Notes on Some Animal Oils and Fats Used in Pharmacy. By P. L. Simmonds, F.L.S.....	296
The Pungency of Soda-Water. By Thomas Warwick.....	299
Therapeutic Notes of Interest to Pharmacists. By Dr. H. M. Whelpley, Ph. G.....	302
CHEMISTRY.	
Letters from Dorpat. By Professor Rudolph Kobert.....	303
Hydrastis Canadensis. By F. A. Thompson.....	305
Pepsins. By L. A. Harding, B.Sc., Ph.D.....	307
On Syrup of Calcium Lactophosphate. By H. W. Aufmwasser.....	307
Darkening of Syrup containing Ferri Phosphas, U.S.P., Due to Partial Reduction of its Ferric Salt to Ferrous by Sunlight. By W. H. Wearn.....	308
Nut Cracking.....	309
Correspondence.	
Paris Letter.....	311
London Letter.....	312
Berlin Letter.....	314
New York Letter.....	315
Attention, Drug Trade.....	316
Chicago Letter.....	316
Pan-American Medical Congress—Section on Gynecology and Abdominal Surgery.....	317
Meeting of the Missouri Pharmaceutical Association.....	317
Imports of Drugs, etc., at the Port of New York, for the Month of June, 1893.....	318
Book Reviews.....	319
Facetiae.....	320
Abstracts and Translations.....	321
Pharmaceutical Progress.....	325
Notes and News.....	331
Trade Supplement.....	335



IRA REMSEN.

The subject of this sketch was born in New York City in 1846. In 1854 the family moved to the country (Rockland County, N. Y.) on account of Mrs. Remsen's health, and there Ira lived and attended school for three years. His education was continued in the public schools of New York City, from 1857 (when the family renounced rural life) till 1860, when he entered what was then the Free Academy, now the College of the City of New York. Remaining there until 1863, he then left to study medicine. Received the degree of Doctor of Medicine from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, in 1867, having spent a year (from June, 1865, to June, 1866) in Europe in general study. After graduating in medicine he decided at once to give up that profession, for which he had little taste, and to pursue the study of chemistry, which was very much more to his liking. He went to Munich in 1867 (being then 21 years of age), in the hope of being able to work with the great Liebig. But Liebig at that time did not receive students in his laboratory. He therefore entered the laboratory of Volhard, a nephew and former assistant of Liebig, and at the same time attended the lectures of Liebig during the year 1867-68. At the advice of Volhard, he then went to Göttingen to continue his studies under Wöhler and Fittig. He had the pleasure of meeting Wöhler in Liebig's house in Munich, and, on arriving in Göttingen, was most cordially received by the great chemist. Remained in Göttingen until the spring of 1870, when he received the degree of Ph.D.; his thesis was on "Piperic Acid and Some of its Derivatives."

At this time Professor Fittig was called to Tübingen as the successor of Strecker, and he invited the young doctor to go with him as assistant—an invitation which

weather in this country has given rise to a slight scare as to the possible contagion-breeding properties of the wood pavement in the larger towns. Attention has been called to a general disorder prevalent—a form of tonsillitis attended in some cases with suppuration, in others with the marks of true diphtheria. Speculation has been rife as to its cause, and some critics have condemned unreservedly wood-pavements as unsanitary. The accusation is so far an unproved suggestion, and there is no evidence showing that ulcerated throats have been more prevalent amongst those who live near and daily traverse this kind of pavement than amongst those who do not; but probably the agitation of the question will be a good thing for the manufacturer of cheap disinfectants.

It would be impossible to conclude this letter without reference to the welcome presence in London of Dr. Rusby, whose original contributions to the BULLETIN OF PHARMACY have always been followed with great interest here and secured him no mean reputation.

BERLIN LETTER.

Animal Extracts as Therapeutic Agents—Current Pharmaceutical Questions—Wool-Fat and Water—The Preparation of Piperazin—Genetic Relations of the Elements, their Rôle in Modern Pharmacy.

The increase of therapeutic agents of the nature of tuberculin and other tuberculous remedies, in spite of the incredulity with which the idea is received in certain quarters and the fallacies into which many of their votaries have unwittingly dropped, indicates that there is something in the notion of animal extracts after all, and that it behooves every practitioner and individual interested in medicine to calmly consider recent developments in this direction. Attention is at once directed to the comparative length of time that it took to introduce animal vaccine, and the rapidity with which the Brown-Séquard testicular fluid, the diphtheritic "heilserum," and similar preparations, have found a hearing and a more or less favorable reception.

Recent observations by physiologists have demonstrated that the functions of many organs are more varied than was formerly supposed. The experiments of Bradford on the kidney have shown that this organ performs other duties than merely excreting urine, and the researches of Minkowski and v. Mering on pancreatic diabetes, of Langlois and Abelous on the suprarenal capsules, and of Horsley and others on the thyroid, have led to the belief in "internal secretions," which exercise an undefined action upon the blood and through it upon the metabolic changes of the tissues. In no case has the composition of these internal secretions been definitely settled, but undoubtedly the matter extracted from the fresh organ by glycerin, salt solutions and other

solvents consists of a heterogenous mixture containing a small quantity of active substance, probably of complex organic nature, manufactured by the organism. It is therefore not surprising that some amount of temporary stimulant effect is produced when these substances are administered to a debilitated person unable to make them for himself, and in the case of myxœdema at least the results have justified the theory.

Thyroid extract is quite in vogue throughout Europe, though according to report it has found most extensive application in England, usually so conservative as to new remedies; and it is no doubt true that success in this instance has stimulated manufacturing chemists to the preparation of extracts of nearly every organ in the body, even including cancrroid and that of the pituitary body as a cure for acromegaly.

A number of interesting debates have appeared in the pharmaceutical journals of this country, and, in conjunction with the reports of one or two important patent fights, have occupied the attention of their readers to the partial exclusion of original scientific communications. One of the most amusing if not absolutely instructive debates arose from an attack made by an analytical chemist upon a well known manufacturer of chemicals with respect to the tendency of wasting time and fogging the laity by meddling with and turning over old facts and processes without any prospect of successful issue, instead of devoting the same energy to striking out and establishing new ideas in the preparation of synthetical products. This led to a lengthy reply from the manufacturer in question, to the effect that the new preparations brought out from time to time by his firm, although not actually involving new principles, did apply the valuable knowledge gained as to the importance of the positions of different organic groups in the molecule of other medicaments in a new direction, and that the improved results obtained justified the introduction of the substances into the therapeutical world.

So far, however, this line of defense has only called down upon the devoted head of the unfortunate manufacturer a further stinging reproof from professional quarters, amply supporting the original charges, and complaining that many manufacturers not only unnecessarily trouble physicians with new remedies of inferior character, but also by not producing pure preparations hamper the march of modern progress in therapeutics.

Several law suits of interest have lately been decided in this country, giving in fact good illustrations of what the rights of a patentee are and what not. As long as lanolin has been brought before the notice of the medical profession, it has been continually attempted to try to upset the patentee's claim, which, of course, is only natural, as crude wool-fat is an article that can be obtained in abundance everywhere. In a recent suit the chief interest was centred around the question whether it is illegal to intimate or hint to a third person that he might

employ any wool-fat if he mixes it with an aqueous solution of a salt, or with perfumed waters such as rose-water, etc. It was contended on the other hand by the defendants that lanolin is not formed if wool-fat is mixed with water containing some other substance, and thus, for instance, the making of a potassium-iodide ointment with wool-fat and water is not an infringement of the lanolin patent. The court, however, decided that the addition of a third substance dissolved in water to the wool-fat does not alter the principle of the case, and that chemists will be fined if they, notwithstanding the decision, try to do so with another product than the wool fat of Liebreich.

A second case turned on the patent rights of piperazin, and demonstrates the power that the German Patent Office possesses in deciding for or against a patent application, and that the decision then involves the full penalties of the law for manufacturing the article under dispute. This course is different from that adopted in many countries, where the rights of the patent offices are not of such absolute and decisive nature, and do not practically replace a court of justice.

An original construction has been placed upon the modern development of pharmaceutical chemistry in relation to synthetical remedies, in a communication by Dr. Erdmann. Amongst other things, he points out that as a general principle the toxicity of a chemical element is approximately in inverse ratio to the frequency of its occurrence upon the earth's crust, and refers to the physiological activity of the elements compared with their position in the periodic system as already pointed out by Dr. Schiff. In conclusion he gives a very instructive tabular view of the most important new remedies, which cannot of course be reproduced here.

NEW YORK LETTER.

Unfortunately, there is no improvement in the wholesale drug market of this city to report. My letter of last month stated that the one marked feature of the wholesale drug trade was general depression. I can only say that the same remarks will apply to the period that has elapsed since that time to the present, only more emphatically. Our money market has not rallied as could have been expected, and loans are very difficult to get. For this reason a disposition to sell on the part of weak holders has been most marked, but in spite of such disposition very few transactions of any very great importance occur.

There are but few changes of importance to note, which will appear as follows:

Opium continues still to decline. The demand during the past month has been exceedingly limited. There has been no speculative interest shown whatever, and, in view of the fact that certain discouraging reports have

reached us from Smyrna, a decline rather than an advance has taken place.

Morphia.—There has been no change.

Quinia.—Very little, it is understood, is coming upon the market from the manufacturers, but the very great supplies in second hands are constantly being urged upon the market. Prices have declined still another cent an ounce during the past month, and the market has again become very seriously weakened by the reports from the last bark sales in Amsterdam, prices having fallen off for the bark some 20 per cent.

Citric Acid.—Manufacturers have advanced their price one cent per pound, and are not in position to make any important deliveries. The demand, furthermore, has increased, and a further advance is looked for.

Insect Powder.—Active demand still continues for this important article, and, owing to the exceedingly high prices abroad for insect flowers, the price for powder has advanced from two to three cents per pound.

Celery seed has received considerable attention during the month, there having been large transactions in the article, concentrating the stock in very close hands.

Ergot.—Owing to advices of short crop abroad, this article is being held at present figures very firmly. The slightest unusual demand would materially enhance values.

Vanilla beans, in the main, have sustained well the price quoted last month, but there is a greater inclination on the part of holders to sell, and prices are, if anything, rather favoring buyers.

Ipecac has again rallied in price, and is from five to ten cents a pound higher than last month, with most favorable reports from the London market for higher prices still. The demand has been somewhat active—sufficiently so, at least, to check the downward course that was reported a month ago.

Golden Seal and Mandrake roots are being forced upon the market at unusually low prices. We do not discover that stocks are unusually large, but holders, being anxious to realize, are pressing sales, with the effect of reducing the market.

Orris root, which has for so long ruled at exceedingly low prices, has at last rallied, owing to small crops, as the result of drouths abroad. This root, of every variety, has advanced, and has a strong upward tendency at present.

Menthol.—Continued advices from Japan to the effect that the yield is small, have had a tendency to sustain menthol at its present very high price. The new crop is commencing to arrive. There is no prospect whatever of decline, but, to the contrary, when in the autumn the demand sets in, much higher prices will have to be paid.

New York City, July 13, 1893.